



What families should know about whooping cough: Suggested talking points

- **Whooping cough is a [bacterial respiratory illness](#) that can cause long-term symptoms and even death.**
 - [Early symptoms](#) typically appear five to 10 days after exposure and may include a runny or stuffy nose, a low fever, and a mild cough.
 - One to two weeks after symptoms appear, some people may experience extreme coughing fits that can cause shortness of breath, trouble sleeping, vomiting, fatigue, and rib fractures. These fits usually last one to six weeks, but they can last up to 10 weeks after infection.
 - About one in three babies under 1 year old who contract whooping cough require hospitalization. They may experience life-threatening pauses in breathing (called apnea), pneumonia, and other complications.
 - Children and adults who have asthma or are immunocompromised are also more likely to develop severe symptoms.
- **Vaccines are the best way to protect against whooping cough.**
 - Two types of vaccines protect against whooping cough: The DTap vaccine is given to babies and children younger than 7 years old, while the Tdap vaccine is given to children 7 years and older and adults. Both vaccines protect against infections from diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough).
 - The CDC recommends that pregnant people receive a single dose of the Tdap vaccine between 27 and 36 weeks of pregnancy, as this lowers the risk of whooping cough in babies younger than 2 months old [by 78 percent](#).
 - Multiple doses are required for the best protection. Learn more about DTaP and Tdap vaccine schedules [from the CDC](#), and talk to your health care provider about how many doses you and your children need.
- **If you or your child has symptoms of whooping cough, isolate them from vulnerable family members and [seek treatment early](#) to reduce the risk of serious illness.**
 - People with whooping cough can be contagious for weeks after infection.
 - Health care providers typically prescribe antibiotics to those recovering from whooping cough at home.
 - Over-the-counter cough and cold medicine [is not recommended](#) for children under 4 years old.
 - Limiting smoke, dust, and chemical fumes at home and using a humidifier can reduce coughing.
 - If you are caring for someone with whooping cough who exhibits pauses in breathing or develops gray or blue skin, call 911 immediately.



What families should know about whooping cough: Frequently asked questions

1. What are the symptoms of whooping cough?

[Early symptoms](#) of whooping cough, also called pertussis, typically appear five to 10 days after exposure and may include a runny or stuffy nose, a low fever, and a mild cough. One to two weeks later, some people may experience extreme coughing fits that can cause shortness of breath, trouble sleeping, vomiting, fatigue, and rib fractures. These fits usually last one to six weeks, but they can last up to 10 weeks after infection.

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2. Which vaccines protect against whooping cough, and who is eligible?

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3. What should families do when whooping cough symptoms appear?

If you or your child has symptoms of whooping cough, isolate the infected person from vulnerable family members. It's also important to [seek treatment early](#) to reduce the risk of serious illness. Health care providers typically prescribe antibiotics to those recovering from whooping cough at home.

Over-the-counter cough and cold medicine [is not recommended](#) for children under 4 years old. However, limiting smoke, dust, and chemical fumes at home and using a humidifier can reduce coughing. If you are caring for someone with whooping cough who exhibits pauses in breathing or develops gray or blue skin, call 911 immediately.